

which these exercises were but the prelude. Both officers and men, and even the participants in the sports, turned their gaze frequently up the Detroit, as if they expected some important approach. The broad reach of the wide river, affording an undisturbed view, as we have stated, for a distance of some nine or ten miles, where commenced the near extremity of Turkey Island, presented nothing, however, as yet, to their gaze, and repeatedly were the telescopes of the officers raised only to fall in disappointment from the eye. At length a number of small dark specks were seen studding the tranquil bosom of the river, as they emerged rapidly, one after the other, from the cover of the island. The communication was made, by him who first discovered them, to his companions. The elder Indians who sat near the spot on which the officers stood, were made acquainted with what even their own sharp sight could not distinguish unaided by the glass. One sprang to his feet, raised the telescope to his eye, and with an exclamation of wonder at the strange properties of the instrument, confirmed to his followers the truth of the statement. The elders, principally chiefs, spoke in various tongues to their respective warriors. The sports were abandoned, and all crowded to the bank with anxiety and interest depicted in their attitudes and demeanor.

Meanwhile the dark specks upon the water increased momentarily in size. Presently they could be distinguished for canoes, which, rapidly impelled, and aided in their course by the swift current, were not long in developing themselves to the naked eye. These canoes, about fifty in number, were of bark, and of so light a description, that a man of ordinary strength might, without undergoing serious fatigue, carry one for miles. The warriors who now propelled them, were naked in all save their leggings and waist cloths, their bodies and faces begrimed with paint: and as they drew near, fifteen was observed to be the complement of each. They sat by twos on the narrow thwarts; and, with their faces to the prow, dipped their paddles simultaneously into the stream, with a regularity of movement not to be surpassed by the most experienced boat's crew of Europe. In the stern of each sat a chief guiding his bark with the same unpretending but skilful and efficient paddle, and behind him drooping in the breezeless air, and trailing in the silvery tide, was to be seen a long pendant, bearing the red cross of England.

It was a novel and beautiful sight to behold that imposing fleet of canoes, apparently so frail in texture that the dropping of a pebble between the skeleton ribs might be deemed sufficient to perforate and sink them, yet withal so ingeniously contrived as to bear safely not only the warriors who formed their crews, but also their arms of all descriptions, and such light equipment of raiment and necessities as were indispensable to men who had to voyage long and far in pursuit of the goal they were now rapidly attaining. The Indians already encamped near the fort, were warriors of nations long rendered familiar by personal intercourse, not only with the inhabitants of the district, but with the troops themselves; and these, from frequent association with the whites, had lost much of that fierceness which is so characteristic of the North American Indian in his ruder state. Among these, with the more intelligent Hurons, were the remnants of those very tribes of Shawnees and Delawares whom we have recorded to have borne, half a century ago, so prominent a share in the confederacy against England, but who, after the termination of that disastrous war, had so far abandoned their wild hostility, as to have settled in various points of contiguity to the forts to which they, periodically, repaired to receive those presents which a judicious policy so profusely bestowed.

The reinforcement just arriving was composed principally of warriors who had never yet pressed a soil wherein civilization had extended her influence—men who had never hitherto beheld the face of a white, unless it were that of the Canadian trader, who, at stated periods, penetrated fearlessly into their wilds for purposes of traffic, and who to the bronzed cheek that exposure had rendered nearly as swarthy as their own, united not only the language but so wholly the dress—or rather the undress of those he visited, that he might